

Washington, DC – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed unanimously H.Res. 121, a resolution calling on the government of Japan to deliver an apology for its sexual enslavement of "comfort women" during World War II. The House of Representatives has never before considered such a resolution, which garnered 168 bipartisan cosponsors and was not opposed on the House floor during its consideration.

**Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15)**, sponsor of the bill, made the following statement upon the bill's passage:

"Today is a truly historic occasion. I am thrilled that the Members of the House of Representatives passed H.Res. 121. In doing so, this deliberative body sent a clear message to our good friend, the government of Japan, that historical reconciliation is not just a concept to be championed, but has very real consequences in the lives of the many women institutionally victimized during World War II.

"The Japanese Imperial Armed Forces coerced some 200,000 'comfort women' into sexual slavery. The women endured gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death, or eventual suicide. To this date, they have still not received a proper apology from the government of Japan. The passage of H.Res. 121 marks an important step forward in the healing process for these women, and brings us closer to demanding accountability and justice for present-day crimes against women and young girls. One need only look to Darfur, Bosnia, and East Timor for contemporary examples of such abuses. Historical reconciliation is crucial to prevent future atrocities.

"Supporters of H.Res. 121 flew to Washington, DC for this momentous occasion from all over the country. Community advocates, joined by Ms. Yong-Soo Lee, a survivor of the 'comfort stations,' watched with strong emotions from the House gallery as Members of Congress spoke in support of their cause. I myself witnessed the beginnings of the reconciliation and healing process as I embraced Ms. Lee after the voice vote.

"This has been a long personal journey for me, as I have advocated for reconciliation since my time in the California State Assembly. In 1999, I authored Assembly Joint Resolution 27 (AJR27), which called on Congress to urge the Japanese government to issue an apology for the victims of the Rape of Nanking, 'comfort women,' and POWs who were used as slave

laborers. That resolution was ultimately passed. I also want to recognize the hard work of my former colleague Mr. Lane Evans, who has been a longtime advocate on behalf of the 'comfort women.'

"Stronger friendships among nations are also forged when we remind each other of our mistakes and share our lessons learned. The twentieth century was full of human rights atrocities during times of war. Only by honoring the memory of these atrocities will we be able to continue challenging nations of today to abide by shared human rights norms. I sincerely hope that the government of Japan will formally, officially, and unambiguously apologize to the comfort women with an open mind and an open heart."